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JAPAN'S NATIONAL IDEAL

By HON. K. MIDZUNO,
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Ladies and Gentlemen: It will be necessary, because of the lateness of the hour, for me to pass over the stretch of history covering the centuries of Japan's past previous to the time when the American fleet, under the command of your gallant sailor-diplomat, knocked at the door of the Island Empire of the East. That empire was then still a *terra incognita* to most of the Western nations, when Commodore Perry invited its secluded people to enter into relations of comity with the nations of the world.

Since that time Japan has occupied a place abreast of the foremost nations of the world by adopting what we call Western civilization. From that time to the present the most cordial relations have existed between the United States and Japan, and, in spite of incidental troubles and of the untiring efforts of the jingoistic papers and professional alarmists, such cordial friendship is bound to be everlasting.

What Japan has done in the last half-century has been very ably presented by the preceding speakers. But, while we express our satisfaction at what has been accomplished during the past forty years, we must not overlook the beneficial results of our seclusion of several centuries. We would have been unable to adopt and digest the Western civilization if our forefathers had not been nurtured in the school of Oriental civilization. Built upon the foundation of the singular taste which the East has for the finer things of life, and inspired by the modern sciences of the West, the new Japan is striving for the goal of refinement. In this struggle the Japanese people have looked, and will continue to look, to the United States for brotherly guidance and friendly assistance.

In this international race toward the goal of refinement Japan is handicapped by her late start, and must close the gaps by leaps and bounds to overtake the European and American people.

What is Japan's national aim and her highest ideal? This is a question often asked not only by foreign critics of Japan, but also

by the Japanese people themselves. If the answer to this question is clearly understood by the Western mind there will be no more talk about the "yellow peril" or probable Japanese aggression. I think I am voicing the opinion of the majority of intelligent and thinking classes of the Japanese people when I say that our national aim is to digest and assimilate the two vast streams of Oriental and Occidental civilization, to adopt those things which, in our judgment, we think are best for the welfare and happiness of the human race at large, and thus to contribute Japan's share toward promoting the comity of nations.

Now, let me say a few words regarding the relations between Japan and the United States. The Pacific Ocean will be the future center of the world's commerce. The Pacific is common to our two countries. The ocean that divides us makes us neighbors.

I rejoice with you that the recent exchange of diplomatic declarations between the United States and Japan was so heartily welcomed not only by the people of both countries, but by the whole world. At the present time, moreover, commerce and trade play a more important part than the honeyed phrases of diplomacy in bringing together the people of different countries. The international relations of to-day no longer consist merely in the exchange of envoys and dispatches; they are founded upon mutual understanding and intercourse, and upon commercial and industrial interdependence. The benefits accruing from recent expressions of friendly sentiment between our two peoples will be greatly discounted if they are not supported and followed by increasing trade and commercial relations.

There was a time in the history of the Anglo-Saxon, a very few centuries ago, when the relations between a good gentleman and his neighbor, who was the same kind of a good gentleman, consisted in either open war or guarded and suspicious truce. When we read of the times of King Arthur's court, or of the barons of King John's reign in England, we are forced to remark that the animosity and misunderstanding between them was due entirely to their ignorance of each other's motives, true thoughts and character.

Gradually they learned that the hearts of all their countrymen were much the same, and that they could trust and love their neighbors, as their own family. So, to-day, you, their descendants, no longer send heralds with ultimatums to the adjoining country, but, instead, with never a thought of trouble, you send your

boys and girls there to attend school, and your eggs there to be marketed. You trust your neighbor because you know him.

This principle applies to all human affairs and relations. It is as true in the intercourse of nations as it is in the intercourse of individuals. So it is with this country and Japan. Those in America, I think they are few, who entertain ill-feelings or doubt about my people are ignorant—ignorant of the character and thoughts and motives of the Japanese. For if the veil of false report and prejudice were lifted, we should find that the hearts of all men, of every country and shore, are much the same.

Complete understanding between this country and Japan, which it is our duty to foster, will inevitably lead to the upbuilding of much greater prosperity and well-being in both countries. It has been my constant experience since my arrival in America to be surprised at the lack of knowledge about Japan and her people. Of course, the intelligent people of this country, those who have read something about Japan, know how beautiful our landscapes are and how picturesque our costumes are. But I wonder if the great mass of the American people know anything definite and concrete about our modern progress.

If this commercial commission were to go home after three months' journeying in this country and tell my countrymen that America is only a country of skyscrapers, ice water and huge bonnets, it would be gross injustice to the people of this great republic. Equal injustice will be done to Japan and her people if you think it is the land only of "Madame Butterfly," paper fans, and incense sticks to destroy mosquitoes. There's the sting, ladies and gentlemen.

It is human nature to study most closely those things in which one's financial interests are involved, or which may affect one's business interests. Commerce demands more intimate knowledge of other people's affairs. Better information stimulates trade. Prosperous trade brings closer friendship. Now, what is the status of trade between our two countries? Japan's trade with the United States, which amounted to only \$6,500,000 in 1881, was about \$106,000,000 in 1907—an increase of sixteen times in a quarter-century. According to the trade returns for 1908, the United States has forged ahead of all foreign countries in trade with Japan.

The most important item of the trade between the United States and Japan is silk—raw silk—and I am glad to say that 61

per cent. (in 1907) of the silk worn by you, ladies, came from Japan and was woven and dyed here. You are the best customers of Parisian dressmakers, and France also imports large quantities of our silk.

The export of raw silk from Japan to the United States amounted to 9,789,955 pounds in 1908, against 7,918,839 pounds in the previous year, 1907—an increase of 1,871,116 pounds. Although the amount has increased, yet the total value of this raw silk has decreased by \$2,888,895. I am not a bit sorry for the decrease in the value of silk for the past year. There is no wind that blows nobody good. You American ladies have had Japanese silk of the better or same grade at \$1.21 cheaper per pound. Thin and fine as they are, the threads of silk are the most important factors that bind us and strengthen and promote the friendly ties uniting our two countries. In this respect, the silk threads are much stronger than the anchor cables of the battleships.

Japan is ninth in the list of Uncle Sam's customers. The Japanese buy more of your products and merchandise than do the Russians, the Spaniards, the Danes, the Austro-Hungarians, the Swiss, the Norwegians, the Portuguese, the Turks or the Greeks. But at the present time, the trade relations between the United States and Japan are rather unbalanced. You buy more from us than we buy from you. In other words, you import more raw materials from Japan than you export manufactured goods to Japan. This balance amounts to \$25,000,000. On the other hand, Japan's trade with European countries shows a balance against her to the amount of \$42,000,000. We buy more manufactured goods from European countries than we sell goods to them.

The kinds of manufactured goods imported into Japan in such enormous quantities from Europe are manufactured in America, and it is equally true that Japan eagerly buys such American products as are sent there. It is astonishing to me how comparatively little the enterprising American has developed the new and fertile markets of the East.

The adjustment of the present uneven trade relations can be accomplished only by Americans gaining a better knowledge of the Japanese market and by the closer study by the Japanese people of American goods. When the American people understand Japan and her people half as well as you do your British cousins, then your trade with Japan will be increased tenfold.